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Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (1979-1992): Correspondence 08

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Authors

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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

April 25

AC--

Per Senator--this letter is still too strong for a Senator to be sending to a governor about the way the governor makes his appointments. Without rewriting it for you, it should make greater use of qualifiers ~~like~~ like "it seems reasonable," etc.

Also, you should know that CP never uses the verb "feel" as in "I feel" in ANY letter.

tom

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Citiart: THE UNION OF RHODE ISLAND ARTISTS

1 April 1978

APR 10 1978

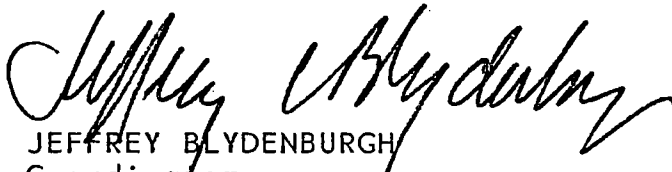
The Honorable Claiborne Pell, United States Senator, ^{APR} 4
418 Federal Building, Providence, Rhode Island

SENATOR PELL, enclosed is a copy of our most recent correspondence with Governor Garrahy. We have sent you a copy because it discusses a problem we feel you should be made aware of because of your interest in the arts at both a national and local level.

We have tried every tactic we can think of to meet with the Governor so that we may discuss with him our views regarding the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts and its role in the community. The issues we feel need the most urgent attention are: the current makeup of the Council's governing Commission and their lack of creativity and leadership in establishing direction and policy for the Council's activities. We have been most unhappy with the way the Governor has handled this matter and his lack of accessibility to discuss the problems.

The artists of this community have, to a large measure, abandoned the Council as a source of funding or providing employment opportunities. It is our contention that it is the role of the Council to provide this direction and support. One only has to look at the operation of other state arts councils to find leadership and programs that greatly improve the position of the artist in the community and at the same time enhance the community's artistic values. The membership of these other commissions is generally at least fifty percent artists.

We only wish that our Governor was as supportive of the arts and artists as you. We would appreciate any assistance you can give us. It is our feeling that if we were able to talk directly with the Governor, we would all come away with a better understanding of the situation. And if there is ever an opportunity to speak directly with you regarding these issues we would appreciate it. Thank you for your attention in this matter.


JEFFREY BLYDENBURGH
Coordinator

401 274 3690

189 Mathewson Street, Room 5, Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Citiart: THE UNION OF RHODE ISLAND ARTISTS

29 March 1978

The Honorable J. Joseph Garrahy, Governor, State of
Rhode Island, State House, Providence, Rhode Island

GOVERNOR GARRAHY, we are writing you in light of long standing problems with the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, the most pressing of which is the current position openings on the Commission. Presently, the majority of the twelve Commissioners are uninformed regarding the majority of the scope and needs of the arts community. This is understandable since the majority of the Commissioners lack a background in the arts, resulting in a limited personal interest in the programs they fund.

The present enabling legislation of the Council, 16-46-3 states:

The Commission shall consist of twelve members, broadly representative of all fields of the performing and fine arts, to be appointed by the Governor subject to the advice and consent of the Senate from among the citizens of Rhode Island who are widely recognized for their interest, competence and experience in connection with the performing, visual and environmental arts. Such appointments shall be made without regard to party, but due consideration shall be given to the recommendations of representative civic, educational, and professional associations and groups, concerned with or engaged in the production or presentation of the performing, visual and environmental arts generally. (emphasis added)

The Commissioners' lack of experience in the arts and their limited interest is exemplified by their poor attendance at Council meetings. Chairperson Donald Aldrich has expressed his continuing difficulty in achieving a quorum --fifty percent of the Commissioners-- at the monthly meetings.

We propose the following changes be made to expand the effectiveness of the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts:

- o That the membership of the Commission be brought into line with the qualifications as stated above, as soon as possible;

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- o That legislative guidelines be established for the selection of Commissioners and that their duties be clearly defined;
- o That the Council, through its grants and funding, recognize the crafts and visual arts. Present funding in these areas is minimal;
- o That the Council further recognize and use artists as a resource for the growth of the arts in Rhode Island. The current artists-in-residence programs do not adequately utilize the available talent.
- o That accessibility to the arts be expanded to include all of Rhode Island. A study of the current expenditures shows that the arts, as funded by the Council, favors a limited audience.

There has been a dramatic change in the arts on both national and state levels. State arts councils, once small bureaucracies within the state administration, have grown and have become a highly visible force in the state and national arts activities. Because of this increased visibility, it is important that future selections for Commissioners of the Council be made with the same care and sensitivity given to appointments for other key positions. As well, placing the most qualified people in these positions will reflect favorably upon you and bring your administration the support of the artists' community.

Members of our organization have repeatedly tried to contact you personally, with no success, about this matter. Under a cover letter dated 7 March 1978, signed by our attorney, Gary Yesser, we have submitted our nominations for the four openings on the Council. We trust you will give your full, careful and prompt consideration to the upcoming appointments. Further we encourage you to name publically all nominations made for the positions.

We would like to discuss these issues with you personally. We are available at your earliest convenience and look forward to hearing from you. Sincerely,

ROGER BIRN, JEFFREY BLYDENBURGH, RICHARD DANTES
KATHIE FLORSHEIM, MARGARET MINTZ

cc: Senator Claiborne Pell, National Endowment on the Arts,
Associated Council on the Arts, CITIARTNEWS